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John Q. Adams' Oration.

JOHN ADAMS, Stationer, London.



AN
ORATION,

PRONOUNCED

JULY 4th, 1793.

AT THE
REQUEST OF THE INHABITANTS
OF THE
TOWN OF BOSTON,

IN COMMEMORATION
OF THE
ANNIVERSARY OF
AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

BY JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.

O NOMEN DULCE LIBERTATIS !

Cic.

*YE shades of ancient heroes ! Ye who toil'd,
Through long successive ages to build up
A labouring plan of state ; behold at once
The wonder done !*

THOMSON.

B O S T O N :

PRINTED by BENJAMIN EDES & SON, in Kilby-Street.

M,DCC,XCIII.

*AT a Meeting of the Freeholders and other Inhabitants of the
Town of BOSTON, duly qualified and legally warned, in pub-
lick Town-Meeting, assembled at FANEUIL HALL, on Thurs-
day the 4th of July, A. D. 1793:*

VOTED,

THAT the SELECTMEN be and hereby are
appointed a Committee to wait on JOHN QUINCY
ADAMS, Esq. and in the Name of the Town to thank
him for the spirited and elegant ORATION, this Day de-
livered by him, at the request of the Town, upon the ANNI-
VERSARY OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA—in which, according to the Institution of the
Town, he considered the feelings, manners, and principles
which led to that great National Event—and to request of
him a Copy thereof for the Press.

Attest,

WILLIAM COOPER, Town-Clerk.



GENTLEMEN,

*IN compliance with the polite Request of my Fellow-Citizens,
the ORATION yesterday delivered, again solicits the In-
dulgence of the Public.*

I am,

Gentlemen,

With sincere Respect,

Your very humble Servant,

JOHN Q. ADAMS.

BOSTON, JULY 5th, 1793.

AN
ORATION.

IT has been a custom, sanctioned by the universal practice of civilized Nations, to celebrate with anniversary solemnities, the return of the days which have been distinguished by events the most important to the happiness of the people. In countries where the natural dignity of mankind, has been degraded by the weakness of bigotry, or debased by the miseries of despotism, this customary celebration has degenerated into a servile mockery of festivity upon the birth day of a sceptered tyrant, or has dwindled to an unmeaning revel, in honour of some canonized fanatic, of whom nothing now remains but the name, in the calendar of antiquated superstition. In those more fortunate regions of the earth where Liberty has condescended to reside, the cheerful gratitude of her favoured people has devoted to innocent gaiety and useful relaxation from the toils of virtuous industry the periodical revolution of those days which have been rendered illustrious by the triumphs of freedom.

AMERICANS !

AMERICANS ! Such is the nature of the institution which again calls your attention to celebrate the establishment of your national Independence. And surely since the creation of the heavenly orb which separated the day from the night, amid the unnumbered events which have diversified the history of the human race, none has ever occurred more highly deserving of celebration by every species of ceremonial, that can testify a sense of gratitude to the DEITY, and of happiness, derived from his transcendent favours.

It is a wise and salutary institution, which forcibly recalls to the memory of freemen, the principles upon which they originally founded their labouring plan of state. It is a sacrifice at the altar of Liberty herself ;—a renewal of homage to the Sovereign, who alone is worthy of our veneration ;—a profession of political fidelity, expressive of our adherence to those maxims of liberal submission and obedient freedom, which in these favoured climes, have harmonized the long-contending claims of liberty and law. By a frequent recurrence to those sentiments and actions upon which the glory and felicity of the Nation rest supported, we are enabled to renew the moments of bliss which we are not permitted to retain ; we secure a permanency to the exaltation which the

the Constitution of Nature has rendered fleeting, and a perennial existence to enjoyments which the lot of humanity has made transitory.

THE "feelings, manners and principles" which led to the Independence of our Country; such, my friends and fellow-citizens is the theme of our present commemoration. The field is extensive; it is fruitful; but the copious treasures of its fragrance have already been gathered by the hands of genius; and there now remains for the glean-
ing of mental indigence, nought but the thinly scattered sweets which have escaped the vigilance of their industry.

THEY were the same feelings, manners and principles, which conducted our venerable forefathers from the unhallowed shores of oppression; which inspired them with the sublime purpose of converting the forests of a wilderness into the favourite mansion of Liberty; of unfolding the gates of a new world, as a refuge for the victims of persecution in the old. The feelings of injured freedom, the manners of social equality, and the principles of eternal justice.

HAD the Sovereigns of England pursued the policy prescribed by their interest, had they not provoked the hostilities of their Colonists against

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the feeble fortress of their authority they might perhaps have retained to this day an Empire which would have been but the more durable, for resting only upon the foundation of immemorial custom, and national affection.

INCUMBERED however with the oppressive glory of a successful war, which had enriched the *pride* of Britain, with the spoils of her own opulence, and replenished the arrogance in proportion as it had exhausted the resources of the nation ; an adventurous ministry, catching at every desperate expedient to support the ponderous burden of the national dignity, and stimulated by the perfidious instigations of their dependents in America, abandoned the profitable commercial policy of their predecessors, and superadded to the lucrative system of monopoly, which we had always tolerated as the price of their protection, a system of internal taxation from which they hoped to derive a fund for future corruption, and a supply for future extravagance.

THE nation eagerly grasped at the proposal. — The situation, the condition, the sentiments of the colonies, were subjects upon which the people of Britain were divided between ignorance and error.

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The endearing ties of consanguinity, which had connected their ancestors, with those of the Americans, had been gradually loosened to the verge of dissolution, by the slow but ceaseless hand of time. Instead of returning the sentiments of fraternal affection, which animated the Americans, they indulged their vanity with preposterous opinions of insulting superiority : they considered us, not as fellow-subjects equally entitled with themselves to every privilege of Englishmen ; but as wretched outcasts, upon whom they might safely load the burden, while they reserved to themselves the advantages of the national grandeur. It has been observed, that the nations the most highly favoured with freedom, have not always been the most friendly to the liberty of others. The people of Britain, expected to feel none of the oppression which a parliamentary tyranny might impose upon the Americans ; on the contrary, they expected an alleviation of their burden, from the accumulation of ours, and vainly hoped that by the stripes inflicted upon us, their wounds would be healed.

THE King—Need it be said, that he adopted as the offspring of his own affections, a plan so favourable to the natural propensity of royalty towards arbitrary power. Depending upon the prostituted valour of his mercenary legions, he was deaf to

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the complaints, he was inexorable to the remonstrances of violated freedom. Born and educated to the usual prejudices of hereditary dominion, and habitually accustomed to the syren-song of adulation, he was ready to believe what the courtly tribe about his throne did not fail to assure him; that complaint was nothing more than the murmur of sedition, and remonstrance the clamour of rebellion.

BUT they knew not the people with whom they had to contend. A people, sagacious and enlightened to discern, cool and deliberate to discuss, firm and resolute to maintain their rights. From the first appearance of the system of parliamentary oppression under the form of a stamp-act, it was met, by the determined opposition of the whole American Continent. The annals of other nations have produced instances of successful struggles to break a yoke previously imposed; but the records of History did not perhaps furnish an example of a people whose penetration had anticipated the operations of tyranny, and whose spirit had disdained to suffer an experiment upon their liberties. The ministerial partizans had flattered themselves with the expectation that the Act would execute itself; that before the hands of Freedom could be raised to repel the usurpation, they would be loaded

ed with fetters ; that the American Samson would be shorn of his locks while asleep ; and when thus bereaved of his strength, might be made their sport with impunity.—Vain illusion !—Instantaneous and forceful, as an electric spark, the fervid spirit of resistance pervaded every part of the country ; and at the moment, when the operation of the system was intended to commence, it was indignantly rejected, by three millions of men ; high-minded men, determined to sacrifice their existence, rather than resign the Liberty, from which, all its enjoyments were derived,

It is unnecessary to pursue the detail of obstinacy and cruelty on the one part ; of perseverance and fortitude on the other, until the period when every chord which had bound the two countries together, was destroyed by the violence of reciprocal hostilities, and the representatives of America, adopted the measure, which was already dictated by the wishes of their constituents ; they declared the United Colonies free, sovereign and independent States.

AMERICANS ! let us pause for a moment to consider the situation of our country, at that eventful day when our national existence commenced. In

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the full possession and enjoyment of all those prerogatives for which you then dared to adventure upon "all the varieties of untried being," the calm and settled moderation of the mind, is scarcely competent to conceive the tone of heroism, to which the souls of freemen were exalted in that hour of perilous magnanimity. Seventeen times has the sun, in the progress of his annual revolutions, diffused his prolific radiance over the plains of Independent America. Millions of hearts which then palpitated with the rapturous glow of patriotism, have already been translated to brighter worlds; to the abodes of more than mortal freedom. Other millions have arisen to receive from their parents and benefactors, the inestimable recompense of their achievements. A large proportion of the audience, whose benevolence is at this moment listening to the speaker of the day, like him were at that period too little advanced beyond the threshold of life to partake of the divine enthusiasm which inspired the American bosom; which prompted her voice to proclaim defiance to the thunders of Britain; which consecrated the banners of her armies; and finally erected the holy temple of American Liberty, over the tomb of departed tyranny. It is from those who have already passed the meridian of life; it is from
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you, ye venerable assertors of the rights of mankind, that we are to be informed, what were the feelings which swayed within your breasts and impelled you to action, when, like the stripling of Israel, with scarce a weapon to attack, and without a shield for your defence, you met, and undismayed, engaged with the gigantic greatness of the British power. Untutored in the disgraceful science of human butchery; destitute of the fatal materials which the ingenuity of man has combined, to sharpen the scythe of death; unsupported by the arm of any friendly alliance; and unfortified against the powerful assaults of an unrelenting enemy, you did not hesitate at that moment, when your coasts were infested by a formidable fleet, when your territories were invaded by a numerous and veteran army, to pronounce the sentence of eternal separation from Britain, and to throw the gauntlet at a power the terror of whose recent triumphs was almost co-extensive with the earth—The interested and selfish propensities which in times of prosperous tranquility have such powerful dominion over the heart, were all expelled, and in their stead, the public virtues, the spirit of personal devotion to the common cause, a contempt of every danger in comparison with the subserviency of the country, had assumed an unlimited controul. The passion for
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the public, had absorbed all the rest ; as the glorious luminary of heaven extinguishes in a flood of refulgence the twinkling splendor of every inferior planet. Those of you my countrymen, who were actors in those interesting scenes, will best know, how feeble, and impotent is the language of this description to express the impassioned emotions of the soul, with which you were then agitated : yet it were injustice to conclude from thence, or from the greater prevalence of private and personal motives in these days of calm serenity, that your sons have degenerated from the virtues of their fathers. Let it rather be a subject of pleasing reflection to you, that the generous and disinterested energies, which you were summoned to display, are permitted by the bountiful indulgence of Heaven to remain latent in the bosoms of your children. From the present prosperous appearance of our public affairs, we may admit a rational hope that our country will have no occasion to require of us those extraordinary and heroic exertions which it was your fortune to exhibit. But from the common versatility of all human destiny, should the prospect hereafter darken, and the clouds of public misfortune thicken to a tempest ; should the voice of our country's calamity ever call us to her relief, we swear by the precious memory of the

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sages who toiled, and of the heroes who bled in her defence, that we will prove ourselves not unworthy of the prize, which they so dearly purchased; that we will act as the faithful disciples of those who so magnanimously taught us the instructive lesson of republican virtue.

SEVEN years of ineffectual hostility, an hundred millions of treasure fruitlessly expended, and uncounted thousands of human lives sacrificed to no purpose, at length taught the dreadful lesson of wisdom to the British Government, and compelled them to relinquish a claim which they had long since been unable to maintain. The pride of Britain, which should have been humbled, was only mortified. With sullen impotence, she yielded to the pressure of accumulated calamity, and closed with reluctance an inglorious war, in which she had often been the object, and rarely the actor of a triumph.

THE various occurrences of our national history, since that period, are within the recollection of all my hearers. The relaxation and debility of the political body, which succeeded the violent exertions it had made during the war; the total inefficacy of the recommendatory federal system, which had been formed in the bosom of contention; the
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peaceable and deliberate adoption of a more effectual national constitution by the people of the union, and the prosperous administration of that government, which has repaired the shattered fabric of public confidence, which has strengthened the salutary bands of national union, and restored the bloom and vigour of impartial justice, to the public countenance, afford a subject of pleasing contemplation to the patriotic mind. The repeated unanimity of the nation has placed at the head of the American councils, the heroic leader, whose prudence and valour conducted to victory the armies of freedom ; and the two first offices of this Commonwealth, still exhibit the virtues and employ the talents of the venerable patriots, whose firm and disinterested devotion to the cause of Liberty, was rewarded by the honourable distinction of a British proscription. Americans ! the voice of grateful freedom is a stranger to the language of adulation. While we wish these illustrious sages to be assured that the memory of their services is impressed upon all our hearts, in characters, indelible to the latest period of time, we trust that the most acceptable tribute of respect which can be offered to their virtues, is found in the confidence of their countrymen. From the fervent admiration of future ages, when the historians of America, shall trace from
their

their examples the splendid pattern of public virtue, their merits will receive a recompense of much more precious estimation than can be conferred by the most flattering testimonials of contemporaneous applause.

THE magnitude and importance of the great event which we commemorate, derives a vast accession from its influence upon the affairs of the world, and its operation upon the history of mankind. It has already been observed that the origin of the American Revolution bears a character different from that of any other civil contest, that had ever arisen among men. It was not the convulsive struggle of slavery to throw off the burden of accumulated oppression, but the deliberate, tho' energetic effort of freemen, to repel the insidious approaches of tyranny. It was a contest involving the elementary principles of government, a question of right between the sovereign and the subject which in its progress had a tendency to introduce among the civilized nations of Europe, the discussion of a topic the first in magnitude, which can attract the attention of mankind, but which for many centuries, the gloomy shades of despotism had overspread with impenetrable darkness. The French nation cheerfully supported an alliance with the United States, and a war with Britain,

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during the course of which a large body of troops and considerable fleets were sent by the French government, to act in conjunction with their new allies. The union which had at first been formed by the coalescence of a common enmity, was soon strengthened by the bonds of a friendly intercourse, and the subjects of an arbitrary prince, in fighting the battles of freedom, soon learnt to cherish the cause of Liberty itself. By a natural and easy application to themselves of the principles upon which the Americans asserted the justice of their warfare, they were led to inquire into the nature of the obligation which prescribed their submission to their own sovereign; and when they discovered that the consent of the people is the only legitimate source of authority, they necessarily drew the conclusion that their own obedience was no more than the compulsive acquiescence of servitude, and they waited only for a favourable opportunity to recover the possession of those enjoyments, to which they had never forfeited the right. Sentiments of a similar nature, by a gradual and imperceptible progress, secretly undermined all the foundations of their government; and when the necessities of the sovereign reduced him to the inevitable expedient of appealing to the benevolence of the people, the magic talisman of despotism was broken, the spell

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of prescriptive tyranny was dissolved, and the pompous pageant of their monarchy, instantaneously crumbled to atoms.

THE subsequent European events which have let slip the dogs of war, to prey upon the vitals of humanity ; which have poured the torrent of destruction over the fairest harvests of European fertility ; which have unbound the pinions of desolation, and sent her forth to scatter pestilence and death among the nations ; the scaffold, smoking with the blood of a fallen monarch ; the corpse-covered field, where agonizing nature struggles with the pangs of dissolution ; permit me my happy countrymen, to throw a pall over objects like these, which could only spread a gloom upon the face of our festivity. Let us rather indulge the pleasing and rational anticipation of the period, when all the nations of Europe shall partake of the blessings of equal liberty and universal peace. Whatever issue may be destined by the will of Heaven to await the termination of the present European commotions, the system of feudal absurdity has received an irrecoverable wound, and every symptom indicates its approaching dissolution. The seeds of Liberty are plentifully sown. However severe the climate, however barren the soil of the regions in which they have been received, such is
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the native exuberance of the plant, that it must eventually flourish with luxuriant profusion. The governments of Europe must fall, and the only remaining expedient in their power, is to gather up their garments and fall with decency. The bonds of civil subjection must be loosened by the discretion of civil authority, or they will be shivered by the convulsive efforts of slavery itself. The feelings of benevolence involuntarily make themselves a party to every circumstance that can affect the happiness of mankind: they are ever ready to realize the sanguine hope, that the governments to rise upon the ruins of the present systems, will be immutably founded upon the principles of freedom, and administered by the genuine maxims of moral subordination and political equality. We cherish with a fondness which cannot be chilled by the cold unanimated philosophy of scepticism, the delightful expectation that the cancer of arbitrary power will be radically extracted from the human constitution; that the sources of oppression will be drained; that the passions which have hitherto made the misery of mankind, will be disarmed of all their violence, and give place to the soft controul of mild and amiable sentiments, which shall unite in social harmony the innumerable varieties of the human race. Then shall the
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nerveless arm of superstition no longer interpose an impious barrier between the beneficence of Heaven, and the adoration of its votaries : then shall the most distant regions of the earth be approximated by the gentle attraction of a liberal intercourse : then shall the fair fabric of universal Liberty rise upon the durable foundation of social equality, and the long-expected æra of human felicity, which has been announced by prophetic inspiration, and described in the most enraptured language of the Muses, shall commence its splendid progress—Visions of bliss ! with every breath to Heaven we speed an ejaculation that the time may hasten, when your reality shall be no longer the ground of votive supplication, but the theme of grateful acknowledgment : when the choral gratulations of the liberated myriads of the elder world, in symphony, sweeter than the music of the spheres, shall hail *your* country, Americans ! as the youngest daughter of Nature, and the first-born offspring of Freedom.



By WILLIAM LUTHER, A. R.

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